

(Aliquippa, PA) - House Veterans Committee Chairman Bob Filner (CA-51) and House Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton (MO-4) recently praised Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-4) for his advocacy on behalf of America's servicemembers and veterans. The Chairmen thanked Congressman Altmire for his leadership in authoring legislation that will ensure the proper screening and treatment of traumatic brain injuries (TBI) suffered by our nation's returning soldiers and that will extend Family and Medical Leave Act benefits to family members of military personnel in order for them to take time to attend to family issues, such as child care, that arise due to loved ones' military deployments. Both measures passed the House in May, and in letters to Congressman Altmire, Chairmen Filner and Skelton stressed their commitment to continue to advance these critical measures as they move to conference with the Senate. Notably, the two measures sponsored by Congressman Altmire were included in the six legislative recommendations set forth in July by the Dole-Shalala Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors, a bipartisan presidential commission.

In May, the House unanimously passed the Traumatic Brain Injury Enhancement and Long-Term Support Act (H.R. 2199) which included in its entirety H.R. 1944, a measure introduced by Congressman Altmire in April. H.R. 2199 would ensure the proper treatment of TBIs sustained by veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. TBI is considered the signature injury of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with up to 300,000 returning troops expected to suffer from it.

"One of my top priorities in the 110th Congress is to improve the health care provided to our nation's veterans," wrote Chairman Filner in a July 26 letter. **"Therefore, I was pleased to see [Rep. Altmire] take the initiative of introducing the Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury Act (H.R. 1944)"** Our nation's veterans are returning from tours overseas, including Iraq and Afghanistan, with symptoms of TBI at an alarming rate. It is critical that Congress ensure these injuries are properly diagnosed and treated."

Also in May, the House approved a floor amendment sponsored by Congressman Altmire to the Defense Authorization Bill (H.R. 1585). The Altmire language amends the Family and Medical Leave Act to include spouses, parents, or children of military personnel in certain circumstances. The amendment was unanimously adopted and H.R. 1585 subsequently passed the House by a bipartisan vote of 397 to 27.

"I want to thank [Rep. Altmire] again for [his] leadership on issues relating to our military and specifically the well-being of our servicemembers," wrote Chairman Skelton on August 3.

"In particular, [Rep. Altmire's] amendment to the National Defense Authorization Bill for Fiscal Year 2008, to allow the family members of military personnel who are called to active duty in a contingency operation to take time off under the Family and Medical Leave Act in order to deal with family issues, such as child care, that arise because of a family members military duty, will benefit our troops by providing more stability for the families of our servicemembers who are strained so much by the pace of current operations."

"We owe it to our troops to do all that we can to see that their families are well taken care of while they are deployed and that they receive the finest quality health care when they return home," said Congressman Altmire. **"I look forward to working with Chairman Filner and Chairman Skelton to ensure that these two pieces of important legislation continue to advance and are enacted into law."**